

The University of Chicago

LUDWIG WINDTHORST
AS A POLITICAL LEADER

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE
SOCIAL SCIENCES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

1935

By

RICHARD HERMAN BAUER

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CHAPTER VI

WINDTHORST AND THE ELECTORATE

Windthorst's fame as a political leader is almost entirely based on his unusual abilities as a parliamentarian. To this day he is referred to as "the great parliamentarian," and as such he will be remembered by future generations. This fact becomes increasingly evident as soon as his other political activities are examined. In turning to such important questions as his relations to the voter and to the various religious and political organizations of the country, it is amazing how little material is to be found. The Catholic periodical literature of his day, as well as the leading political journals, constantly emphasize his role as a parliamentarian, and make only casual references to his non-parliamentary activities. The simple explanation for this scarcity of material lies in the fact that he devoted nearly all of his energies to the performance of parliamentary duties. Leading the Centre in the Reichstag and Landtag gave him little time for anything else; this work alone was enough to keep any man busy. Moreover, his advanced age and poor vision forbade him from traveling extensively to participate in political campaigns.

Nevertheless, from time to time, whenever the opportunity presented itself, he engaged in those non-parliamentary activities that tended to strengthen the foundations of the party. As a shrewd political leader, he realized the importance of making contacts with the people. The strength of the Centre, he declared,

depends upon the support of the voter.¹ To gain and hold that support was a task in which he was deeply interested. During the entire parliamentary career he saw the necessity of organizing the electorate into an effective working unit, and of bringing it into harmony with the parliamentary groups. He constantly urged the solidarity of all Catholics. "Windthorst achieved undying fame as an unrivalled tactician," wrote Johannes Kissling, the Catholic historian, who added that "the manner in which he kept alive the contacts between the parliamentary groups and the electorate was very exemplary."²

When Windthorst became the undisputed leader of the Centre in 1874, he found no unified political organization in the country, such as the party has today, through which he could appeal to the voter. He could hardly have expected one, since the Centre had first come into existence in the fall of 1870, largely at the instigation of Catholic leaders of the Rhineland and Westphalia.³ Moreover, it should be recalled that the party really had its origin in the legislative chambers of the Reichstag and Landtag, when a number of parliamentarians, who had been elected on a common program, agreed to unite into a Fraktion for legislative purposes. In the seventies and eighties the term "Centre" did not refer to some political organization of voters

¹J. N. Knopp, Ludwig Windthorst (Dresden und Leipzig: Verlag von Carl Reissner, 1898), p. 259.

²Johannes B. Kissling, Geschichte der deutschen Katholikentage (Muenster i.W.: Verlag der Aschendorffschen Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1923), II, 120.

³Johannes Ziekursch, Politische Geschichte des Neuen Deutschen Kaiserreiches (Frankfurt a./Main: Frankfurter Societaets-Druckerei, 1927), II, 224-27; Ludwig Bergstraesser, Geschichte der politischen Parteien in Deutschland (Mannheim: J. Bensheimer, 1932), pp. 78 f.; Eduard Huesgen, Ludwig Windthorst, Sein Leben, Sein Wirken (Koeln: J. P. Bachem, 1911), pp. 73-75.

the country, but rather to this Fraktion. It still remained for Windthorst and his colleagues to develop such an organization, upon which the parliamentary group might securely depend.

In the absence of a nation-wide organization, the Centre conducted its elections in a simple manner. In every case the initiative was taken by the Fraktion--by the Reichstagfraktion in national elections and by the Landtagfraktion in Prussian elections.⁴ Just prior to an election the Fraktion would formulate a platform, and would then urge the formation of a special committee in every province, the main functions of which were to select candidates and to supervise the elections within its territory.⁵ Each committee would usually consist of trustworthy delegates from various districts of the province; frequently the most important member was a representative in one of the legislatures; he would establish the connections between the Fraktion and the committee.⁶ When the election was over, these committees would dissolve. The same story repeated itself in the ensuing elections.

This method of supervising elections, which delegated the final authority in the Fraktion, naturally placed Windthorst in an advantageous situation. It is not known how far he influenced the temporary election committees that were created from time to time, either in their composition or in their selection of candidates. There is some evidence to prove that he occasionally served them in an advisory capacity. In some instances they asked him to recommend worthy candidates, and in others to settle

⁴Germania, October 2 and 3, 1873.

⁵Ibid., August 5, 1876.

⁶Ibid., June 4, 1873.

various disputes.⁷ In such districts where the Catholic element was weak, he favored the election of friendly candidates belonging to other parties; in most cases he recommended Conservatives, since their attitude was not so hostile to the Church as that of the other parties.⁸ On several occasions he urged the Catholics of Minden-Ravensberg to vote for Marcard and Ungern-Sternberg, both of whom belong to the Stoecker group of Conservatives, which disapproved of the Kulturkampf from the very beginning.⁹ He repeatedly supported the election of Richter, the leader of the Progressives, and that of Lasker, an influential National Liberal, both of whom opposed the Kulturkampf.¹⁰ In the Reichstag campaign of 1888, when he sought to break the alliance between the Conservatives and the National Liberals, he urged the election of democratic candidates.¹¹ But more important were his efforts in writing the platform and the special election appeals, to which he devoted considerable time and thought. Both the platform and the appeals were published in the Centrist newspapers, and usually carried his signature, together with the name

⁷Paul Majunke, Ludwig Windthorst (Frankfurt a./M und Luzern: Druck und Verlag von A. Fresser, Nachfolger, 1891), p. 25.

⁸Felix Rachfahl, Eugen Richter und der Linksliberalismus im Neuen Reiche in Zeitschrift fuer Politik (Berlin: Carl Heymanns Verlag), p. 306; letter of Windthorst to Professor Reuss of Trier, dated December 29, 1889, in Stimmen aus Maria Laach, LXXXIII, 29-31.

⁹Heinrich Heffter, Die Kreuzzeitungspartei und die Kartellpolitik Bismarcks (Leipzig: Georg Herrmann Verlag und Buchhandlung, 1927), pp. 50 f.

¹⁰Julius Bachem, Erinnerungen eines alten Publizisten und Politikers (Koeln: Verlag und Druck von J. P. Bachem, 1913), p. 69.

¹¹Hermann Cardauns, Adolf Groeber (M.-Gladbach: Volksvereins-Verlag, 1921), p. 43.

of several other prominent leaders.¹²

There was no need for Windthorst to create any special election machinery in his own district, since he carried every election by overwhelming majorities.¹³ The opposition was powerless whenever he was a candidate for office. His success was due to his great popularity among his own people, who took justifiable pride in the fact that the "pearl of Meppen" belonged to them, and at the same time were deeply grateful for his past and present services to the Church.¹⁴ Repeatedly they expressed their admiration for their famous leader by remembering him with gifts and bestowing various honors on him. On September 29, 1877, they presented him with a silver table service as a token of their appreciation.¹⁵ They never overlooked any of his birthdays. To illustrate the confidence they placed in him, the Reichstag election of 1874 may serve as an example. His opponent was none other than Adalbert Falk, the illustrious author of the "May Laws." The National Liberals had urged the Minister of Public Education and worship to be a candidate for the Reichstag in the district of Meppen-Lingen, in order to weaken Windthorst's hold on the electorate, perhaps even to defeat him. As in the previous elections, Windthorst won by his old majority; he received 16,825 votes and Falk 4,555 votes.¹⁶ In the archduchy of Arenberg, where the Catholics formed the dominating element, 10,560

¹²Germania, October 2, 3, 18, 21, 1873.

¹³Fritz Specht and Paul Schwabe, Die Reichstags-Wahlen von 1867 bis 1907 (Berlin: Carl Heymann Verlag, 1908), pp. 200 f.

¹⁴Germania, June 1, 1880; October 1, 1884.

¹⁵Ibid., October 2, 1877.

¹⁶Specht and Schwabe, op. cit., pp. 200 f.

votes were cast for him and only 53 for his opponent.¹⁷ This victory was truly remarkable, when it is realized that no committee had been appointed to help him, no mass meetings had been held, nor had any funds been raised for election purposes--this could not be said of his enemies. Indeed, such victories were a real tribute to the famous parliamentarian.

Although the committee system of conducting elections prevailed down to Windthorst's death, there was a growing tendency in all parts of the country to establish permanent organizations, mainly for the purpose of forming more effective work in the various political campaigns. In fact, by 1880 several of the larger cities, such as Berlin, Frankfurt-am-Main, Cologne, Coblenz, and Bochum, had their own local party organizations. It is interesting to note that the parish formed a political unit in the Zentrumspartei of Koeln.¹⁸ The more important Catholic provinces also began to organize; by the end of the Kulturkampf there were local political organizations in the provinces of Westphalin, the Rhine, and Silesia, each with its own constitution and permanent officials. Windthorst did not participate actively in the formation of these political organizations; the work was largely done by local leaders; thus Baron v. Loe was the moving spirit behind the Zentrumspartei of Mainz.¹⁹ However, in the founding of the Silesian Zentrumspartei he helped in framing the constitution; upon his advice an article was inserted which provided that only Catholics may be candidates for office.²⁰ In

¹⁷Germania, January 22, 1874.

¹⁸J. Meerfeld, Die deutsche Zentrumspartei (Berlin: Verlag fuer Sozialwissenschaft, 1918), p. 68.

¹⁹Koelnische Volkszeitung, #942, 1905; Germania, October 10, 1882.

²⁰Koelnische Volkszeitung, October 26, 1906.

later years this article aroused considerable controversy among a group of party leaders, some of whom believed that it was unwise to include Protestants as candidates. Wasn't the Protestant particularist, Dr. Bruehl of Hanover, an active supporter of the Centre?²¹ Moreover, others felt that their opponents had sufficient evidence to prove that the Centre was purely a religious organization as long as the article remained in the Constitution. In a meeting of the Silesian Zentrumspartei on October 24, 1906, Dr. Porsch defended the exclusion of Protestant candidates.²² He pointed out that Silesia never had any outstanding Protestants like Dr. Bruehl to support the party, that there was no likelihood of its ever having any in the future.²³ It might be added that shortly after Windthorst's death the various local organizations combined to form a National Zentrumspartei with its own headquarters and staff officials.

As a matter of fact, the Centre could almost dispense with a political organization, because it could depend upon the loyal support of the Catholic Church, which had always formed its firm foundation. Although Windthorst and his colleagues often insisted that it was purely a political party, to which Protestants might very well belong, the fact remains that it became a defender and protector of the Catholic interests.²⁴ Its traditions were Catholic, since its ancestor was the Katholische Fraktion of the Prussian House of Representatives; its organizers were staunch Catholics, such as Mallinckrodt and the two Reichenspergers, who

²¹Julius Bachem, Jose Blätter aus meinem Leben (Freiburg 1. Br.: Herdersche Verlagshandlung, 1910), p. 43.

²²Koelnische Volkszeitung, October 26, 1906.

²³Ibid.

²⁴p. Braeunlich, Die deutschen Katholikentage (Halle: Verlag des Evangelischen Bundes, 1910), I, 36-41.

foresaw the coming conflict; and its voters from the very outset were Catholics. With the outbreak of the Kulturkampf, it became all the more closely identified with Catholic interests. Catholics in all walks of life, the rich and the poor, the aristocrats and laborers, the educated and the illiterate, all of these rallied to its support; the handful of "Old Catholics" under Doellinger, as well as a sprinkling of Catholics of South Germany, who at first were suspicious of the Centre lest it might surrender the Church to Prussia, were the only exceptions to the rule.²⁵ The passage of every new "May Law" added many new members to the party and strengthened the religious unity among its followers. The tie of religion bound it closely to millions of voters in Germany, who were already highly organized from the religious standpoint. To overlook this point is to miss one of the leading sources of strength to the Centre Party.

Of invaluable assistance to Windthorst in urging the electorate to support the Centre were the priests, bishops, and other members of the Catholic hierarchy, who formed a powerful ecclesiastical organization, which in troublous times like the Kulturkampf, could summon millions of devout Catholics to vote for the Centrist candidates.²⁶ It was not necessary for him to

²⁵ Germania, July 4, 1879; Paul Zimmermann, Das Zentrum, Entstehung, Wesen und politische Taetigkeit (Berlin: Buchhandlung der Nationalliberalen Partei, 1909), p. 20; a strong indictment of the Centre as a religious organization found in R. Baumstark, Der erste deutsche Reichstag und die Interessen der katholischen Kirche (Freiburg, 1871).

²⁶ The role of the clergy is described more fully in Hartmann Bodewig, Geistliche Wahlbeeinflussungen in ihrer Theorie und Praxis dargestellt (Muenchen: J. F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1909); Arthur Boethlingk, Bismarck und das paepstliche Rom (Berlin: Puttkammer & Muehlbrecht, 1911), p. 153; Majunke, Ludwig Windthorst, pp. 16 f.; Historische-Politische Blaetter fuer das katholische Deutschland, 108 (1891), 711; Koelnische Volkszeitung, #306, 1870.

arouse them to action; if anything, at times he had to check their religious zeal. Their cooperation was spontaneous and voluntary. Even months before Bismarck launched his attack on the Church, they prepared to protect themselves against the approaching storm. They took an active part in the founding of the Centre, and in the earliest campaigns of the party urged their parishioners to vote for its candidates.²⁷ During the election to the Prussian Landtag, held in the fall of 1870, the influential archbishop Paulus Melchers of Cologne on October 28 made the following appeal to Catholics:

I ask you, my dearly beloved in the Lord, to vote for able, dependable, and, whenever possible, devout Catholics, of whom you can be sure that they will vigorously fight for the maintenance of the constitutional freedom and independence of the church. . . .²⁸

Bishop Johann Bernhard of Muenster made a similar appeal; among other things, he stated, "I therefore admonish you, beloved in the Lord, that you do your duty in the coming election as faithful sons of the church."²⁹ The priests did not restrict their efforts in trying to influence the electorate, but in many cases ran as candidates for office. In the Centrist groups of both the Reichstag and the Landtag the clerical element was quite strong; men like Ketteler, Hitze, Majunke, and Dasbach were only a few of the more important clergymen who were represented in the Centre. In the founding of Catholic newspapers, which supported the Centre, the priests played a very significant role. While Windthorst was fighting the "May Laws" with all his strength, he received many letters of encouragement and praise from priests in

²⁷Koelnische Volkszeitung, #304, 1870.

²⁸Germania, September 27 and October 21, 1873; Der Katholik, 1874, p. 224.

²⁹Koelnische Volkszeitung, #306, 1870.

all parts of Germany. In April, 1871, he received a letter of praise from the clergy of Upper Silesia; in August of the following year a Pastor Krome praised him for his activities.³⁰ He in turn did not hesitate to use the clergy for political purposes. For example, on December 23, 1889, he asked the bishop of Breslau, to urge the re-election of Dr. Franz to the Reichstag.³¹ Needless to say that he appreciated the support of the clergymen, who defended their active participation in purely political matters by maintaining that the independence and existence of the church were at stake.

In addition to the clergy, innumerable Catholic organizations lent their support to Windthorst and the Centre.³² There were dozens of charitable, missionary, and educational societies scattered over the land; there were organizations for the old and young, for men, women, and children. Each parish had its due share of them. The Kulturkampf, as will be seen later, increased their numbers from time to time. All of them, to be sure, were purely religious organizations, engaged in the performance of some religious activities. Nevertheless, they strengthened the solidarity of the Catholics, and served as a medium through which the Centre could reach the voter. In that sense they were auxiliaries of the Centre. How well Windthorst used them for political purposes, will become clear in some of the following paragraphs.

If Windthorst was not very active in forming political organizations in the country, he was extremely eager to establish

³⁰Germania, August 18, 1872.

³¹For other examples of clerical help in election see Hartmann Bodewig, cited in footnote #26.

³²Meerfeld, op. cit., pp. 68-70.

harmonious relations between the parliamentary groups and the electorate. To achieve this end, he felt the necessity of making frequent contacts with the voters, not only to find out their wishes, but also to give them an account of the activities of their representatives in the Reichstag and Landtag.³³ Like any other astute political leader, he constantly held his ear to the ground, in order to take note of any strange sounds or tendencies among his followers, so that these might be checked or directed into the proper channels.³⁴ Through the medium of the existing political and religious organizations, all of which were fundamentally Catholic, he managed to meet his voters, sometimes face to face.

Occasionally he addressed important Catholic assemblies and religious organizations. In every case the Catholics greeted him with wild enthusiasm, so great was their confidence in their leader.³⁵ Whenever he ascended the speaker's platform, his audience would welcome him with a storm of applause. As a rule, he did not merely speak on religious subjects, but always took the opportunity to emphasize the importance of supporting the Centre. On June 19, 1871, he addressed 6,000 members belonging to the Catholic Church of Hanover.³⁶ On August 16, 1871, he appeared before 1,000 Catholics in Papenburg, located near Osnabrueck;

³³Joseph Stamminger, Sie haben einen Mann begraben (Wuerzburg, 1891), pp. 18 f.

³⁴Hermann Cardauns, Aus dem Leben eines deutschen Redakteurs (Koeln: Druck und Verlag von J.P. Bachem, 1901), pp. 140 f. Karl Bachem, Vorgeschichte, Geschichte, und Politik der Deutschen Zentrumspartei (Koeln: Verlag von J. P. Bachem, 1927-1932), III, 397.

³⁵Carl Schlesinger, "Ludwig Windthorst" in Grosse Maenner einer grossen Zeit (Muenster: Adolph Russel's Verlag, 1894), pp. 164 f.

³⁶Germania, June 23, 1871.

about 500 of them had come from his own electoral district of Meppen-Lingen.³⁷ In his speech he reviewed the parliamentary activities of the Centre, and pointed out the necessity of warding off all attacks made on the very foundations of the Church. On July 19, 1873, he was the highly honored guest of the Catholics of Stuttgart, who were celebrating the birthday of Uhland, the famous Swabian poet.³⁸ He had many good words to say in favor of his Swabian friends. Besides admiring their traits of character, such as their friendliness, cheerfulness, and generosity, he praised their contributions to German literature and culture. What impressed him above all was their abiding love for their German fatherland, as reflected in the poetry of Uhland. How foolish and ridiculous, therefore, was the charge of the National Liberals and their allies that the "Catholics had no father"! When he addressed a huge gathering of Catholics in Muenster, on October 19, 1875, he made a powerful plea for Christian education.³⁹ The church, he maintained, must retain its control over the school. He made a similar plea in Paderborn, on August 20, 1877, before a huge throng of Catholics.⁴⁰ He demanded that the old privileges of the church in the field of education should be restored by the state. While passing through Bonn on July 13, 1883, he addressed the St. Cecilia Choral Society.⁴¹ Quite a few other examples might be cited to show how he used religious organizations to promote the interests of his party.⁴²

From 1879 on Windthorst attended the annual conventions

³⁷Ibid., August 16 and 30, 1871. ³⁸Ibid., July 19, 1873.

³⁹Ibid., November 4, 1875.

⁴⁰Ibid., August 22, 1877.

⁴¹Ibid., July 15, 1883.

⁴²For other speeches of Windthorst see ibid., November 8, 1881; September 25, 1882; and October 4, 1882.

of the Catholic organizations of Germany, popularly called the Catholic General Assemblies or simply the Katholikentage.⁴³ These conventions were held in important Catholic cities, such as Mainz, Cologne, and Munich, usually during the last weeks of summer or during the first weeks of autumn. The practice of holding such Katholikentage originated in Mainz in 1848 for the threefold purpose of establishing religious solidarity, warding off pending attacks on the Church, and providing an opportunity for the discussion of pressing religious problems.⁴⁴ Their founders wanted them to serve as a sort of "open forum" for the Catholics of the country. From the very beginning they enjoyed a steady growth, and played an important role in the religious life of Germany.

The significance of the Katholikentage should not be underemphasized.⁴⁵ Since they were attended by delegates from all the leading Catholic organizations, such as the innumerable charitable, missionary, educational, and prayer societies, they represented a cross-section of German Catholicism. Thousands of faithful flocked to them every year, including bishops, priests, noblemen, lawyers, professors, laborers, business men, students, and after 1879 parliamentarians of the Centre with Windthorst at

⁴³Katholikentage from 1879-1890:

1879 - Aachen	1885 - Muenster
1880 - Konstanz(did not attend)	1886 - Breslau
1881 - Bonn	1887 - Trier
1882 - Frankfurt a/M.	1888 - Freiburg i.Br.
1883 - Duesseldorf	1890 - Bochum
1884 - Amberg	1890 - Koblenz

The two leading histories of the Katholikentage are:

(a) Kissling, Katholikentage. 2 Vols. Written from Catholic standpoint; (b) Braeunlich, op. cit. 2 Vols. Written by a Protestant. For brief account of Katholikentage see Staatslexikon, III, 38.

⁴⁴Kissling, Katholikentage, II, 120.

⁴⁵Ibid.

their head. Held together by the common bond of religion, all of these classes mingled without any difficulty; a spirit of friendliness and mutual understanding usually prevailed. Important also was the fact that the Katholikentage created new religious organizations from time to time; as a rule, no new organization was permitted to function without their consent. Thus in the course of a few years they gave rise to dozens of influential societies.

The Kulturkampf exerted a profound influence upon the character of the Katholikentage, as it did on the majority of Catholic organizations of the time. Before 1870 they largely discussed religious questions, leaving the field of politics alone.⁴⁶ But as soon as the tension between Church and state increased they took an active interest in political matters. What was happening in the Reichstag and Landtag was of real concern to them. In the opinion of Catholic historians, they were forced to adopt this new attitude against their will, because the independence of the Church was at stake.⁴⁷ The Protestant historian, Braeunlich, maintains that after 1870 they really amounted to great political gatherings of the Centre.⁴⁸ He offers several proofs to support his statement. In the first place, he asserts that the Centre determined where the Katholikentage should meet, hoping thereby to strengthen the influence of the party in certain definite localities.⁴⁹ Moreover, he charges that many political speeches were made during its sessions, even by non-

⁴⁶Braeunlich, op. cit., I, 28.

⁴⁷Kissling, Katholikentage, II, 72.

⁴⁸Braeunlich, op. cit., I, 35 f.

⁴⁹Ibid., I, 43.

parliamentarians.⁵⁰ Finally, he states that they were shortly dominated by the leader of the Centre, especially by Windthorst, who converted them into instruments of party propaganda.⁵¹ Although Braeunlich is prejudiced against everything that even smacks of Catholicism, his assertions contain evidence of the change in the nature of the Katholikentage.

The question has sometimes been raised, why did not Windthorst begin to attend the Katholikentage as early as 1871? Why did he wait until 1879? The answer is quite simple. Up to 1879 his responsibilities were so heavy that he was forced to devote all of his time to them. With the disintegration of the National Liberals in 1879, who had been his most bitter enemies, he found more opportunity to engage in other activities.⁵² Moreover, there had been no necessity on his part to attend the meetings, since the heat of the Kulturkampf was sufficient to weld the Katholikentage and the parliamentary groups of the Centre into a unity.⁵³ But with the approach of peace between church and state, when the question of religious defense became less important to the Centre, while other matters of vital interest forged to the front, he felt that it was imperative to maintain the unity which the Kulturkampf had created. He wanted to be doubly sure that the Katholikentage would loyally support the Center in the future, since through them he could effectively reach the Catholics of Germany.⁵⁴ Then, too, he fully realized that the

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 45.

⁵²Kissling, Katholikentage, II, 22; Bachem, Vorgeschichte, III, 396.

⁵³Bachem, op. cit., III, 396.

⁵⁴Kissling, Katholikentage, II, 62, 243.

Katholikentage, by emphasizing the religious solution of problems, would tend to promote harmony among the various classes of the Catholic population.⁵⁵ Thus they could help in lightening his own burden as parliamentarian.

When Windthorst finally attended the Katholikentage in Aachen in 1879, as well as the others in succeeding years, he was received with enthusiastic acclaim.⁵⁶ From the very first he was easily the most popular, the most respected, and most influential guest of the assembly, revered and admired by all. Every delegate automatically regarded him as his leader, and wished to meet the man who had dared defy Bismarck. It was interesting to observe how he mingled with his fellow Catholics.⁵⁷ Gifted with a cheerful disposition and winning ways, he had little difficulty in conversing with all types of people.⁵⁸ His refreshing humor was a never failing source of delight. At times he could be seen conversing with a priest, later with a nobleman, and still later with some merchant or inconspicuous tradesman.⁵⁹ As he knew no partiality, he extended a hearty welcome to all, even to the most humble. He regularly attended the parliamentary sessions of the various Catholic organizations, carefully listening to all discussions. Sometimes he would interrupt the proceed-

⁵⁵Stenographische Berichte ueber die Verhandlungen der beiden Haeuser des Preussischen Landtages (Preussisches Abgeordnetenhaus)--hereafter referred to as P.A.H.--November 28, 1877; Bachem, Vorgeschichte , III, 323 f.

⁵⁶Kissling Katholikentage, II, 68, 99; Joseph Schroeder, Blaetter der Erinnerung an Ludwig Windthorst (Muenster: Verlag der Alphonsus-Buchhandlung, 1891), p. 12; Johann Menzenbach, Ludwig Windthorst in seinem Leben und Wirken (Trier: Verlag der Paulinus Druckerei, 1891), p. 110.

⁵⁷Menzenbach, op. cit., p. 110.

⁵⁸Knopp, op. cit., pp. 259 f.; Schlesinger, op. cit., pp. 196 f.

⁵⁹Schlesinger, op. cit., pp. 196 f.

ings by making some constructive suggestions, or by offering a few words of encouragement; and usually he managed to inject a little humor into dull sessions. In a short time he became thoroughly acquainted with the leaders and activities of the various societies, such as the St. Boniface Missionary Society, the St. Joseph Missionary Society, the Holy Sepulchre Missionary Society, the Catholic Fraternities, the Society of Catholic Merchants, the Society of Catholic Apprentices, the St. Vincent and St. Elizabeth Societies for Charity, the Goerres Society for Educated Catholics, and hosts of others.⁶⁰ There was no other organization in the country that gave Windthorst such unusual opportunities to meet Catholic leaders in all walks of life and from all parts of Germany as did these annual meetings of the Katholikentage.

It would be unfair to think that Windthorst merely used the Katholikentage for political purposes. That would immediately stamp him as a hypocrite of the worst order. As a devout Catholic, who was interested in the welfare of his church, he was eager to promote the religious activities of the national assemblies. From time to time he actively supported the formation of new religious organizations. In 1883 he praised the work of the St. Canisius Society, whose main purpose was to establish religious unity through the medium of prayer.⁶¹ He believed that prayer was the most effective means by which the Protestants might be won back into the Catholic fold. He suggested that the tenth of November, Luther's birthday, be set aside as a day of prayer on which the Catholics of Germany should plea to God to restore the religious

⁶⁰Der Katholik, II (1889), 324 f.

⁶¹Kissling, Katholikentage, II, 96f., 128; Braeunlich, op. cit., I, 237 f.

unity of four centuries ago.⁶² He manifested a deep interest in religious education, and fought for the return of the Jesuits into the empire. Likewise he constantly approved all measures designed to extend the missionary activities of the Church.⁶³ He encouraged the work of the Sisters of Mercy, whom he rated highly as successful missionaries.⁶⁴ In his opinion greater efforts should be made to convert the Protestant inhabitants of northern Germany.⁶⁵ As an afterthought, did he perhaps feel that the missionaries would add new voters to the Centre Party?

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that he also attended the Katholikentage with the express desire of strengthening the foundations of his party, otherwise he would not have referred to his annual visit as "his autumnal manœuvre."⁶⁶ He stated that one of their primary functions should be "to organize the great army of German Catholics," so that "the fifteen million Catholics of Germany will form one Centre."⁶⁷ His underlying political motive becomes all the more evident in the analysis of his famous speeches, which he held at the close of every session before the assembled delegates. As long as he visited the Katholikentage, his final speech constituted the most important event of every meeting. Not only did the delegates listen to it with rapt attention, but the Catholics of entire Germany read it with great interest.⁶⁸ Even the hostile newspapers devoted considerable

⁶²Braeunlich, op. cit., pp. 237 f.

⁶³Kissling, Katholikentage, II, 244.

⁶⁴Braeunlich, op. cit., I, 263.

⁶⁵Ibid., I, 264.

⁶⁶Knopp, op. cit., p. 259.

⁶⁷Braeunlich, op. cit., II, 168.

⁶⁸Kissling, Katholikentage, II, 66; Bachem, Vorgeschichte , V, 200; Eduard Huesgen, Ludwig Windthorst, Sein Leben, Sein Wirken (Koeln: J. P. Bachem, 1911), p. 305.

space to it in their columns, regarding it as a sort of official pronouncement of the Centre. Amid the applause of the delegates, Windthorst reviewed the activities of the Centre in the past year, pointing out its difficulties, its victories, and its un-completed tasks. He never failed to include some humorous incidents, much to the satisfaction of his audience. In his final statements he usually made an urgent appeal for the continued support of all Catholics.⁶⁹

It might be worthwhile to consider a few of his political statements. In 1884 he insisted that a committee should be organized in every electoral district "to supervise at elections, as well as to arrange for political meetings, to which representatives should be invited to give an account of themselves. . . ."⁷⁰ Just before an election to the Landtag, he made the following appeal for votes in 1885:

Yes, my friends, if we only sing solo in Berlin and the Choir fails to join us, then there is little hope for us. A single individual may gain attention, but not respect. But as soon as he has 10,000 people supporting him, then he has the respect of others. Please take note of that; and when you send us to Berlin, be sure to have the goodness to see to it that over 10,000 will stand behind us. We want to see to it that 10,000 will stand behind us. We want to be as active as before, and even pay more attention to the elections. The Centre should not lose a single seat, but should conquer others. . . . We must make every effort to re-elect the present representatives of the Centre. In such districts, where we have no chance of winning, we must select those candidates who show the greatest inclination to be fair to us.⁷¹

He made numerous appeals to the women, asking them to urge their husbands to vote for the Centre; perhaps he realized that women as a rule are more religious than men. He remarked on one occasion:

⁶⁹Kissling, Katholikentage, II, 105, 115.

⁷⁰Braeunlich, op. cit., I, 47.

⁷¹Ibid.

Women are the best agitators for election purposes; no wife should permit her husband to stay at home on election day. Eventually women will have to mark the ballots, because their handwriting is so much more legible than that of men. In every case they must beware that no National Liberal is elected.⁷²

Political statements such as these can be quoted at length. Even after the leading "May Laws" had been repealed, he continued to stress the importance of unity. "If we remain united, we shall continue to be strong; otherwise we shall be annihilated."⁷³

Besides addressing religious organizations of various kinds, he sometimes appeared before political gatherings, usually during an election campaign; but even in these cases his audiences consisted largely of Catholics. Undoubtedly he was the most effective campaigner of the Centre. He drew the largest crowds, and his speeches aroused the greatest interest. On August 5, 1879, he addressed an enthusiastic meeting of the Zentrumspartei of Coblenz.⁷⁴ When the Rhenish Zentrumspartei held its party day in Cologne on September 24, 1882, three thousand people gathered in the famous Guerzenich Hall to hear him.⁷⁵ Two days later he addressed a political meeting in Grefeld.⁷⁶ And on October 2nd of the same year the Zentrumspartei of Duesseldorf listened to his plea for support. However, the total number of his addresses before purely political groups was not very large.

One example, indeed the most noteworthy of his career, will be sufficient to illustrate his ability as a political cam-

⁷²Bodewig, op. cit., p. 65; Braeunlich, op. cit., I, 47; Menzenbach, op. cit., p. 44.

⁷³Huesgen, op. cit., p. 241.

⁷⁴Germania, August 5, 1879.

⁷⁵Ibid., September 25, 1882.

⁷⁶Ibid., September 27, 1882.

paigner. The election campaign that followed the Reichstag dissolution of January 14, 1887, was one of the most turbulent in the history of the German Empire. Bismarck bent every effort to secure the election of a Reichstag that would pass the septennate and support his other measures. To achieve this objective, he drove fear into the hearts of the people by creating one of his famous war-scares. His newspapers and spokesmen circulated exaggerated reports that France was preparing to attack Germany and emphasized the necessity of electing representatives to the next Reichstag, who would gladly rally to the defense of the Fatherland.⁷⁷ Windthorst at once discredited the Bismarckian propaganda with the remark that "the French will never attack us; they are too weak."⁷⁸ Vicious attacks were made on the Centre, which was portrayed as catering to the disloyal elements of the nation. It was severely reprimanded for defying the "orders" of the peace-loving pope.⁷⁹ Naturally the most scurrilous statements were hurled at Windthorst, the "Guelph," whose Catholicism was a mere cloak to cover his selfish and unpatriotic tendencies. The Catholics were urged to get rid of a man who betrayed their best interests. On January 31 the Koelnische Zeitung stated "the fact remains that Windthorst declined the septennate as a Guelph, and not as a Catholic."⁸⁰ The National Liberals eagerly supported Bismarck in his assault on the Centre; they craved revenge; they were not so much interested in the passage of the septennate as in weakening their opponents.⁸¹ Even some Catholic leaders were

⁷⁷Ibid., October 4, 1882.

⁷⁸Bachem, Vorgeschichte , IV, 187.

⁷⁹Ibid., IV, 183 f.

⁸⁰Koelnische Zeitung, January 31, 1887

⁸¹Graf Paul von Hoensbroech, Rom und das Zentrum (Leipzig: Druck und Verlag von Breitkopf und Haertel, 1907), pp. 196 f.

won by the tactics of the chancellor.⁸² Thirty-six Catholic noblemen signed a declaration, which deplored the attitude of the Centre toward the military measure, and denounced its alliance with the Poles and "Guelphs," undoubtedly the statement was instigated by Bismarck himself.⁸³

The relentless opposition placed the Centre in the most trying situation of its history. Its leaders, worried over the outcome of the election, were eager to inspire confidence among their followers. The outlook was not very promising. Under such circumstances the Rhenish Zentrumsparlei decided to hold a great political rally in Cologne on Sunday, February 6, to which the seventy-six year old Windthorst was invited.⁸⁴ In the meantime Bismarck, who still held the leading card in his hand, determined to discredit completely the Centre in the eyes of its voters. Two days before the meeting, while the famed parliamentarian was on his way to Cologne, the chancellor published the second Jacobini Note, in which the Pope urged the Centre to vote for the septennate.⁸⁵ In fact, everywhere newspapers carried blazing front-page articles with the following assertions: "The pope declares himself against the Centre!" "The pope favors the septennate," and "Windthorst censured by papal note!"⁸⁶ When Windthorst heard the news on the train, his calm for once was shaken. He was visibly affected. The publication of the note was the last thing he had expected! He fully realized that the masterful last-minute strategy of Bismarck was a crushing blow

⁸²Bachem, Vorgeschichte , IV, 185.

⁸³Ibid.; Majunke, Ludwig Windthorst, p. 583.

⁸⁴Huesgen, op. cit., p. 234.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid.

to the Centre. How was he to reconcile his party's opposition to the septennate with the papal wishes? It was with great misgivings that he proceeded to Cologne. The very existence of his party was at stake!

By the time Windthorst reached his destination, he had formulated his plan to strike back at Bismarck and thereby save his party from extinction.⁸⁷ His old confidence rapidly returned. He at once consulted with the leaders of the Rhenish Zentrumsparthei, and outlined to them the main points of his forthcoming speech.

When I heard of the publication of the second papal note, my first reaction was to resign my mandates and to withdraw from political life. But I was already seated in the train, and the meeting here in Koeln had been definitely called. Could I return under these conditions? Could I leave the Centre party in the lurch? No! I felt that I must go to Koeln and that I must speak.⁸⁸

Regarding his speech on the following day, he said, "I shall start from the rear," by which he meant that he would first emphasize the pope's high regard for the work of the Centre, as expressed in the second Jacobini note, before discussing other matters.⁸⁹

A great throng gathered in the Guerzenich on the early afternoon of February 6th to hear his message. The large hall was crowded to capacity, while thousands failed to gain admission. Before the main entrance stood men who distributed copies of an extra edition of the Koelnische Zeitung, which contained the second Jacobini note. An atmosphere of suspense and tenseness hung over the huge audience, which keenly felt the critical

⁸⁷Ibid.; Felix Bachfahl, "Ludwig Windthorst und der Kulturkampf," in Preussische Jahrbuecher, pp. 483 f.

⁸⁸Bachem, Vorgeschichte , IV, 190.

⁸⁹Ibid.

situation of the moment, so significant in the history of the Centre Party.⁹⁰ What would the "pearl of Meppen" say? How would he explain the Centre's hostility toward the septennate, when the pope wished the party to adopt a friendly attitude? What would be his solution for the present crisis? Everyone knew that his words would have a tremendous influence on the future of the Centre Party.

As the aged leader of the Centre entered the hall, and was then accompanied to the speaker's platform by young Dr. Carl Bachem, he was given an enthusiastic reception, which must have been a source of great encouragement in this hour of trial.⁹¹ The continued applause dispelled the anxiety and gloom of a few moments ago. But as soon as Windthorst began to speak, a sudden hush fell over the audience which was eager to hear every word that passed his lips. And what an impressive speech he delivered! It was undoubtedly the most masterful of his long career.⁹² It gripped the hearts of his hearers, who supported every statement he made. Here, indeed, was the most shining example of his ability to win and hold the interest of an audience.

For Windthorst accomplished the impossible, thanks to his excellent legal equipment. He took the second Jacobini note and interpreted it in such a way as to serve his own immediate purpose, which was to arouse the voters against the septennate and to assure them of the harmony existing between Rome and the Centre. By reading various ideas into it, some of which were undoubtedly foreign to the pope's thinking, as well as by over-emphasizing certain statements and underemphasizing or omitting others, he managed to prove that the relations between the

⁹⁰Ibid., IV, 192.

⁹¹Ibid.; Huesgen, op. cit., p. 234.

⁹²Huesgen, op. cit., p. 234.

Vatican and the Centre were very satisfactory.⁹³ In fact, he succeeded in convincing his hearers that the pope wanted them to vote for the Centre; to do otherwise would be acting contrary to his wish. It was fortunate for him that Bismarck had for some unknown reason published the second papal note instead of the first, since the latter was very definite in asking the Centre to vote for the septennate, and hence could not be subjected so readily to various interpretations.⁹⁴ When the first note was finally published a few days later, on February 9, it failed to produce the desired results. Windthorst's speech had taken the sting out of its publication.

In view of its far-reaching results, the speech deserves closer analysis. Instead of denying that the pope had 'no right to interfere in purely political matters, which would have been the logical but tactless thing to do, Windthorst shrewdly began his address by placing great emphasis on that part of the Jacobini note which contains Leo XIII's unqualified endorsement of the Centre.⁹⁵ He thereby made the pope's high regard for the Centre the central theme of his argument, placing minor stress on the most important part of the note, which set forth the papal instructions to the Fraktion to vote for the septennate. While interpreting the note in this way--contrary, to be sure, to the way in which Leo XIII intended it to be interpreted--he was wise and diplomatic enough, whenever mentioning the head of the Church, to speak of him in a most respectful and reverent

⁹³For full discussion of Windthorst's speech see Hoensbroech, Rom und das Zentrum, pp. 214 f.

⁹⁴Bachem, Vorgeschichte . . . , IV, 191 f.

⁹⁵Hoensbroech, Rom und das Zentrum, pp. 236 f.

manner.⁹⁶ Since the Holy Father desired that the Centre should continue to function, Windthorst drew the logical deduction, namely, that all Catholics, if they hoped to carry out the papal desire, should vote for its candidates; and, of course, that is what the clever leader of the Centre wanted them to do.

Moreover, he pointed out, the pope had expressly stated that in purely political matters the party should be absolutely independent. Windthorst's implication was that the septennate was a political measure, and hence the pope had no right to interfere. Not that he had any intentions to censure Leo; on the contrary, he appreciated the fact that "diplomatic considerations" had induced the pope to interfere. This was true enough; but he failed to add that the pope had primarily interfered for religious reasons. It should be recalled that Leo was not merely interested in improving the diplomatic relations between the Vatican and the German Empire; he also ardently wished that the remaining Kulturkampf measures would be repealed.⁹⁷ For the papal support of the septennate, Bismarck had promised concessions to the Church. Windthorst then continued by maintaining that the Centre would have been glad to carry out the wishes of the pope, if it were at all possible. But if the Centre had voted for the septennate, it would have endangered its very existence, because it would then have violated its pledge to oppose increasing military burdens, thereby losing the confidence of its voters, upon which the party had been built. And could the Zentrumsfraktion afford to undermine this firm basis, when the pope advocated the continued existence of the party? Thereupon he briefly answered the

⁹⁶Huesgen, op. cit., pp. 236 f.

⁹⁷Texts of first and second Jacobini notes in ibid., pp. 231, 233.

widespread charge that he had deliberately intercepted the papal note, when it should have been shown to all members of the Centre. He called attention to the fact that he had been asked to exercise the utmost discretion in its use. If a third party had been informed, it would have been a violation of the discretion which had been requested. Others might do that, but "a member of the Centre simply can't." Writers like Hoensbroeck, the ex-Jesuit, contend that Windthorst's excuse is nothing but an alibi, since they believe that the pope wanted the entire Reichstagsfraktion to know his intentions; as a matter of fact, the second Jacobini note is quite specific in asking the chairman of the Fraktion, Baron von Franckenstein, to inform all members of the pope's desires.⁹⁸ At any rate, Windthorst promised that the pope's wishes would be carefully considered in the next meeting of the Fraktion, but at the same time he reassured his audience that the party would not sacrifice its independence in political matters. Was this not a tacit admission that the pope's instructions in political matters were to be respected? It is significant to note that not even once did Windthorst directly deny the papal authority to interfere in political matters.

After having interpreted the Jacobini note to the satisfaction of his hearers, Windthorst could now turn to other matters with a lighter mind. He went on to describe the changing attitude toward the pope on the part of the Centre's opponents. A few years ago they considered him an arch-enemy, the source of all evil, but now they praised him "as the only savior in a time of need."⁹⁹ Windthorst added that today "every one is calling

⁹⁸Hoensbroeck, Rom und das Zentrum pp. 214 f.

⁹⁹Text of Guerzenich speech in Huesgen, op. cit., p. 237.

upon the Holy Father."¹⁰⁰ And when he quoted the old Latin phrase, "O Jerum, jerum, o quae mutatio rerum," there was a great outburst of applause.¹⁰¹

In discussing the possibility of war, he reviewed the international situation to show that France was in no position to attack Germany. He called the whole war scare "a frivolous game," by which the chancellor hoped to gain three objectives: to win support for his military measure, to gain a majority in the new Reichstag, which would blindly do his bidding, and to crush the Centre and "especially that wicked Guelph, Windthorst."¹⁰² Although some newspapers already considered him as good as dead, he assured his hearers that "old Windthorst still lives," a man who "doesn't even do the people the favor of dying"; such remarks, of course, aroused much laughter.¹⁰³ He faithfully promised his followers to carry on the struggle to the bitter end. "If one has learned to exercise under fire, one does not easily become afraid."¹⁰⁴

The last part of his speech was an appeal for party solidarity. He urged his followers to present a united front against their opponents. "If we do not stand together as a compact group, firm and resolute, we shall amount to nothing; then we shall be a minority."¹⁰⁵ He warned his audience not to vote for those Catholic candidates who favor the septennate, even if they do maintain that in other matters they will support the policies of the Centre. Such candidates, if elected, would prove unreliable and untrustworthy, since they would adhere to no definite principles, but would shift from one party to another; they would

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²Ibid., pp. 238 f.

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 239.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p. 240.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 241.

weaken the Centre by their activities, and perhaps even destroy it. However, if unity prevailed within the Centre, he predicted that the party would increase in power and influence, in spite of the present crisis. And since the enemy could not destroy the Centre, its failure could only be brought about by dissension among its own members; in that event the following words should be inscribed on its memorial: "It was never conquered by its enemies, it was forsaken by its friends."¹⁰⁶

The speech produced a profound effect, not only upon those who heard it on that memorable Sunday afternoon, but upon thousands of others in all parts of Germany.¹⁰⁷ Seldom had Cologne witnessed such a significant political gathering, which resulted in a great triumph of Windthorst over Bismarck by thwarting the latter's plans to crush the Centre.¹⁰⁸ By publishing the papal note on the eve of this important Catholic assembly, the chancellor had played his leading card to destroy the Centre; he had thrown a bomb into the Centrist camp, which might have caused untold damage. But thanks to Windthorst's clever manipulation of the situation, the party emerged from the crisis more unified than ever before. He used the very weapons, by which Bismarck hoped to destroy the party, to strengthen and solidify it. The Guerzenich address stands out as one of his most remarkable achievements.

But was he honest when he interpreted the Jacobini note to serve his own purposes? Did he not deliberately stretch and distort its real meaning? There is no question that he went to the limit in interpreting the message in favor of his party. But

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Bachem, Vorgeschichte , IV, 197-200.

¹⁰⁸Huesgen, op. cit., p. 242.

what else could he have done under the circumstances? Should he have admitted that the pope could dictate to the Centre, which would have amounted to an open confession that the party after all was not independent? Such an admission would have been disastrous to the existence of the party, since for years he had emphasized that the Centre was absolutely independent in political matters. The simple explanation of the whole affair is that he recognized the seriousness of Bismarck's strategy, and like any other opportunist made the best of it, even if it involved a rather one-sided interpretation of the papal order. Hoensbroech confidently asserts that Windthorst made the following remark after leaving the speaker's platform: "With God's help I have bravely lied my way through again."¹⁰⁹ This assertion, which Hoensbroech tries to prove, provoked considerable newspaper comment at the time. It is interesting to note that none of the Centrist leaders who heard the speech recalled such a statement of Windthorst. Moreover, it should be pointed out that the Hanoverian expression "sich durchluegen" does not mean "to lie" at all, but rather "to find a happy way out of a difficult situation."¹¹⁰ Even Bennigsen and other Hanoverians interpreted the expression in this sense.¹¹¹ As a matter of fact, some other writers maintain that Windthorst made the statement on another occasion.¹¹²

Windthorst's speech aroused the fury of his enemies, many of whom interpreted his words as signifying an open revolt against Rome. Hostile newspapers, such as the Koelnische Zeitung, which

¹⁰⁹Hoensbroech, Rom und das Zentrum, p. 216.

¹¹⁰Huesgen, op. cit., p. 242.

¹¹¹Bachem, Vorgeschichte . . . , IV, 196 f.

¹¹²Ibid., IV, 197.

was one of the main organs sponsoring Bismarck's Kulturkampf-politik, bitterly assailed him for defying the papal wishes, and urged that all good Catholics, who still believed in papal infallibility, not to support this traitor to their cause; it was certainly strange to observe how Windthorst's opponents now took the side of the pope, whom they had so violently denounced in the past. Moreover, they declared that his address was conclusive evidence to prove that he was no Catholic at heart, but for his own selfish ends was willing to sacrifice the welfare of the Catholic Church.¹¹³

But all such attacks were of no avail, since the Centre withstood them quite successfully. Although it lost one seat in the Reichstag, decreasing its total membership from 99 to 98, its popular vote increased from 1,282,000 (1884) to 1,516,000, registering a gain of over 200,000 votes.¹¹⁴ It is true that Bismarck gained a majority for the septennate, so that he was able to form a cartel to support his policies; by creating a war-scare and driving fear into the hearts of the voting masses, he had gained the greatest triumph in years.¹¹⁵ It is equally true that the Centre lost the dominant position it had held since the election of 1878. But if it is borne in mind that Bismarck's new cartel was soon torn asunder, and that the Centre shortly regained its former position, the chancellor's victory was a short-lived one.¹¹⁶ Perhaps the most significant thing was that Windthorst's

¹¹³Koelnische Zeitung, February 7, 1887.

¹¹⁴Huesgen, op. cit., p. 242.

¹¹⁵Karl Kenkel, Die Entwicklung der politischen Parteien in Deutschland von 1848 bis zum Abgange Bismarcks (Paderborn: Druck und Verlag der Junfermannschen Buchhandlung, 1911), p. 37.

¹¹⁶ibid.; Wilhelm Kisky, Der Augustinus-Verein zur Pflege der katholischen Presse von 1878 bis 1928 (Duesseldorf: Verlag des Augustinus-Vereins, 1928), pp. 7-32.

strategy, as revealed in his famous Guerzenich speech proved conclusively to Bismarck that he could not hope to dominate the Centre by way of Rome.

Like his opponent Bismarck, Windthorst recognized the importance of the press as an organ of public opinion and party propaganda. He was among the first of the Centrist leaders to arouse the Catholics to establish and to read their own newspapers. As early as August 16, 1871, in a speech delivered before a Catholic assembly of Papenburg, he urgently pleaded for the foundation of an independent Catholic press.¹¹⁷

If we are to win the struggle, which was foisted upon us against our wishes, but in which we participate for defensive reasons, it is absolutely necessary that we are represented in and supported by the press.¹¹⁸

There are two things, he said, which are indispensable for the establishment of a press: intelligence and financial support. He was convinced that on the basis of the first qualification the Catholics could maintain an excellent press; but he deplored the fact that "we have not sufficient means at our command."¹¹⁹ However, he added that the financial support would be forthcoming, if Catholics would be more willing to sacrifice for this worthy cause, and if many Catholics would stop reading hostile newspapers. In conclusion, he made a stirring appeal for the support of existing Catholic newspapers as well as for the founding of others.

When Windthorst issued this appeal the Catholic press was extremely weak. In fact, even before 1870 there were comparatively few Catholic newspapers in the country; most of them were insignificant sheets with limited influence.¹²⁰ In 1848 there

¹¹⁷Germania, August 30, 1872.

¹¹⁸Ibid.

¹¹⁹Ibid.

¹²⁰Kisky, op. cit., pp.7-32.

were only six newspapers which really expressed the Catholic Weltanschauung.¹²¹ By 1865 this number had gradually grown to twenty journals with about 60,000 subscribers; thus only a small percentage of the German Catholics read their own journals.¹²² From time to time several noteworthy attempts were made to strengthen the press; for example, chaplain Andreas Niedermayer wrote a pamphlet in May, 1861, in which he pointed out the crying need for establishing Catholic newspapers.¹²³ While it is true that a few Catholic press organizations came into existence, the total result of all these efforts to strengthen the press was very disheartening. What was the reason for this apparent failure? According to Kisky, a prominent Catholic journalist, the Catholics had developed no national political party, without which there could be no influential press.¹²⁴ Neither the Catholic representatives in the Landtag, nor those in the legislatures of the south German states had succeeded in founding any united political party.

Windthorst's words of encouragement were hardly necessary, for simultaneous with the formation of the Centre dozens of newspapers in all parts of the country made their first appearance, while the old ones experienced a sudden rejuvenation. It was no coincidence that the most influential journal of all, the Germania, appeared on January 1, 1871.¹²⁵ The same forces that had induced the Catholic parliamentarians to unite for defensive purposes brought about a rapid development of the Catholic press.¹²⁶ Its

¹²¹Ibid., p. 7.

¹²²Ibid. *

¹²³Ibid., pp. 26-27.

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 27.

¹²⁵Ibid., p. 36; Bachem, Vorgeschichte . . . , III, 133.

¹²⁶Kisky, op. cit., pp. 36, 55; H. van Koolwyk, Zentrums Presse und Zentrum (Berlin: Skizze von Carl Heymanns Verlag, 1889), p. 5; Bachem, Vorgeschichte . . . , III, 154 f.

astonishing growth, according to Windthorst, was without equal in the history of the world.¹²⁷ In 1887 he feared that there were too many Catholic newspapers instead of too few.¹²⁸ Frequently newspapers were founded by local party leaders. In many cases the clergy lent a willing hand to the newly founded organs, helping them in the early and difficult stages of their development. Often the first editors belonged to the priesthood.¹²⁹ Loeffler correctly emphasizes that "everywhere the threatening Kulturkampf led the Catholics to see the necessity of close cooperation.¹³⁰ There was a demand that the Catholic parliamentarians should form a united party. Likewise, there was a desire for new organs of Catholic public opinion. The Germania stated that "the Catholic press of Germany owes its rapid growth--one might even say its very existence--to the Kulturkampf."¹³¹ It is important to bear in mind, as Kisky points out, that the Catholic press was converted into a party press with the founding of the Centre.¹³² No longer was its scope merely confined to the field of religion, but after 1871 its main function was to support the parliamentary activities of the Catholic parliamentarians.¹³³ It so to speak became the mouthpiece of the Centre. Undoubtedly it derived much strength and unity from its connection with a powerful political organization.

¹²⁷Kissling, Katholikentage, II, 204.

¹²⁸Ibid.

¹²⁹For example, Paul Majunke and Dr. Adolf Franz of the Germania.

¹³⁰Quoted from Kisky, op. cit., p. 36.

¹³¹Germania, September 22, 1874.

¹³²Kisky, op. cit., p. 36.

¹³³Ibid.

Windthorst did not participate actively in the establishment of Catholic newspapers; this work was accomplished by other leaders, such as Chaplain Georg Dasbach, who alone succeeded in founding a dozen sheets or more.¹³⁴ From beginning to end Windthorst remained an interested spectator, who observed the phenomenal growth of the press with a sense of appreciation and satisfaction. At times he encouraged the founding of newspapers in certain regions of Germany; for example, while addressing the Katholikentag of February, 1888, he regretted the fact that "so little had been done for the Catholic press of Baden"; he urged that every effort must be made "to found at least one large newspaper in Baden, as well as a large number of smaller ones."¹³⁵ In every case the practical execution of his recommendations was left to others. The founding of the Germania was largely due to the initiative of Friedrich v. Kehler, a member of the imperial and Prussian legislatures, and of Edmund Eirund, a Catholic merchant of Berlin.¹³⁶ When the second editor of the paper, Majunke, was imprisoned for having written several articles against the government's policy toward the Church, Windthorst attempted to effect his release.¹³⁷ Somewhat later, after the editor had regained his freedom, Windthorst was instrumental in removing him from the editorial staff of the paper; he felt that the man lacked the necessary tact and diplomacy for the position.¹³⁸

With the most important event in the early development of

¹³⁴For work of Chaplan Dasbach of. Staatslexikon, I, 1327.

¹³⁵Bachem, Vorgeschichte , VIII, 116; Braeunlich, op. cit., I, 47.

¹³⁶Kisky, op. cit., pp. 37 f.

¹³⁷Germania, February 26, 1874.

¹³⁸Bachem, Vorgeschichte , III, 133 f.

the press Windthorst had no direct connection. When one Catholic newspaper after another was founded in rapid order, the need for some centralized control became apparent. It was imperative that the press should adopt a uniform attitude toward all important political questions. To solve this critical situation, Catholic leaders of the press organized the Augustinus-Verein in Duesseldorf on May 15, 1878.¹³⁹ The object of this organization was threefold; to defend the Catholic viewpoint, to support the Centre, and to establish harmonious relations among the Catholic newspapers of the country. Moreover, it created special information bureaus for the benefit of its members, and maintained its own reporting service in the various legislative chambers of Germany.¹⁴⁰ One of its early leaders was Windthorst's intimate friend, Dr. Franz X. Schulte, a Catholic priest and author; it is not known whether he received any particular instructions from the noted parliamentarian.¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, it is a matter of record that the relations between Windthorst and the Augustinus-Verein were most cordial. By special public announcement it honored the veteran Centrist leader on the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday, and helped him in raising funds for the construction of his beloved Marienkirche in Hanover.¹⁴²

Windthorst did not contribute many articles to the press, according to his intimate friend, Dr. Julius Bachem, who was a member of the Reichstag and a journalist for the Koelnische Volkszeitung, which next to the Germania was the most influential

¹³⁹Kisky, op. cit., pp. 62 ff.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁴¹Ibid., p. 65; Bachem, Vorgeschichte , V, 199.

¹⁴²Kisky, op. cit., p. 105.

Catholic newspaper of Germany.¹⁴³ However, there is no question that a number of them were written at his instigation.¹⁴⁴ He maintained friendly relations with the journalists of all leading newspapers, such as the Frankfurter Zeitung, but particularly with those who represented the Centrist press.¹⁴⁵ In addition to Karl Bachem, he took a fancy to young Herman Cardauns, a brilliant writer for the Koelnische Volkszeitung, whose books contain some valuable information on the character of the parliamentarian.¹⁴⁶ He conducted an interesting correspondence with this young man. Whenever reporters came to interview him, he was eager that they should publish his remarks as he wished them to be presented. He always feared lest his statements might be misinterpreted by the public.¹⁴⁷

Although Windthorst came into contact with the leading Catholic organizations by attending the Katholikentage, it seems as if his relations with some of them were much closer than with others. For example, on several occasions he took the opportunity to praise the "Society of Catholic Merchants," which was founded by Dr. Friedrich Elz of Mainz in 1877 for the purpose of creating

¹⁴³The author had an interview with Dr. Karl Bachem of Koeln in September, 1933; Bachem, Vorgeschichte . . . , V, 198.

¹⁴⁴Bachem, Vorgeschichte . . . , VIII, 458; Bachem, Lose Blaetter aus meinem Leben, p. 41; Stimmen aus Maria-Laach, LXXXIII, 21 f. A number of articles in some of the earlier copies of the Germania bear the initials "L.W." Cf. Germania, May 20, 1873.

¹⁴⁵Cardauns, Aus dem Leben eines deutschen Redakteurs, p. 138. Windthorst inspired several articles published in the Frankfurter Zeitung, Kisky, op. cit., p. 65; Bachem, Vorgeschichte . . . , V, 198.

¹⁴⁶Hermann Cardauns, Fuenfzig Jahre Koelnische Volkszeitung (Koeln: Verlag und Druck von J.P. Bachem, 1910).

¹⁴⁷Cardauns, Aus dem Leben eines deutschen Redakteurs, p. 137; Bachem, Vorgeschichte . . . , V, 198.

solidarity among the Catholic merchants and of encouraging charitable endeavors, and, as Braeunlich would add, for the purpose of crowding the Protestants out of business.¹⁴⁸ He called it a "bataillion of the future," which would assume the continued existence of the party; he believed that it would develop "solidarity" as well as "solidity" among the Catholics.¹⁴⁹ He admonished all young merchants to study Janssen's History of Germany, so that they might be prepared to ward off attacks on their religion.¹⁵⁰ Since he was deeply interested in Catholic education, even to the extent of urging the establishment of a Catholic university in Muenster, it was only natural for him to have some connection with the Catholic educational organizations.¹⁵¹ More than once he addressed Catholic fraternities, which enjoyed a period of rapid growth in the seventies and eighties, thanks to the Kulturkampf and the staunch support of the Katholikentage. Windthorst considered them the bulwarks of the Centre, from which the future leaders of the party might be drawn.¹⁵² In December, 1872, he was made an honorary member of "Winfridia," one of the most influential Catholic fraternities.¹⁵³ At the Katholikentag held in Amberg, 1884, he referred to the fraternities as defenders of the faith at the various educational

¹⁴⁸Menzenbach, op. cit., p. 188; Kissling
Katholikentage, II, 166; Braeunlich, op. cit., I, 110.

¹⁴⁹Braeunlich, op. cit., I, 111; Kissling,
Katholikentage, II, 166.

¹⁵⁰Braeunlich, op. cit., I, 111.

¹⁵¹Kissling, Katholikentage, II, 181.

¹⁵²Braeunlich, op. cit., II, 168-72.

¹⁵³Cardauns, Fuenfzig Jahre Kartellverband; Germania,
December 14, 1872.

institutions of the country.¹⁵⁴ In 1887 he advised their members to study more diligently than non-Catholics if they hoped to compete successfully with the latter in later life; he reminded them of the fact that much more was demanded of Catholics than of non-Catholics in a Protestant country like Germany.¹⁵⁵ Besides encouraging the activities of Catholic students, he appreciated the important role of the Catholic men of learning. He found many words of praise for the historical works of Janssen and Onno Klopp, which interpret German history from the Catholic viewpoint.¹⁵⁶ He supported the work of the "Goerres Society for the Encouragement of Knowledge," which was organized by Catholic leaders in 1876 to foster Catholic learning in all fields of intellectual endeavor.¹⁵⁷ Undoubtedly this organization owes its beginning to the Kulturkampf; when enemies of the Church attacked the backwardness of Catholic knowledge, educators like Georg v. Hertling, a promising young Privatdozent at the University of Bonn, saw the necessity of defending and promoting Catholic scholarship.¹⁵⁸ The Katholikentage, of course, aided it in every possible way; the pope, too, gave his sanction to the organization.¹⁵⁹ Starting with 285 members, by 1900 its total membership amounted to approximately 3,000. To this day it is unquestionably the most important educational organization among

¹⁵⁴Kissling, Katholikentage, II, 187-89.

¹⁵⁵Ibid., p. 192.

¹⁵⁶Ibid., II, 184; Braeunlich, op. cit., II, 154 f.

¹⁵⁷A short history of the Goerres-Gesellschaft is sketched in Cardauns, Die Goerres-Gesellschaft, 1876-1901 (Koeln: Kommissions-Verlag und Druck von J.P. Bachem, 1901); Braeunlich, op. cit., II, 151 f.

¹⁵⁸Cardauns, Die Goerres-Gesellschaft, pp. 1-11.

¹⁵⁹Germania, August 5, 1879; Cardauns, Die Goerres-Gesellschaft, p. 11.

the Catholics of Germany.¹⁶⁰ It has achieved great success in the field of scholarship; its annual reports and numerous publications contain valuable articles on many subjects; its greatest accomplishment has been the compilation of the Staatslexikon, a well-known German Encyclopaedia.¹⁶¹ It was significant that Windthorst was one of the first members of the society, and that he immediately induced others to join. He attended several of its meetings, and watched its development with keen interest.¹⁶² Some of its foremost leaders, such as Hertling, Groeber, Bachem, Hitze, and Spahn, were prominent figures in the Centre.¹⁶³

If Windthorst was not very active in actually establishing organizations for the purpose of strengthening his party, he should at least be given credit for founding the Volksverein für das Katholische Deutschland, which until 1933, when it was dissolved at the request of the Nazi government, ranked as one of the most powerful Catholic societies in Germany; indeed, in some respects, as will be pointed out later, it was the most influential of all.¹⁶⁴ Unfortunately he never lived to observe its far-reaching results, since it was first created on October 24, 1890,

¹⁶⁰Cardauns, Die Goerres-Gesellschaft, p. 12.

¹⁶¹Staatslexikon, im Auftrag des Goerres-Gesellschaft unter mann Sacher, Fuenfte Auflage (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder & Co., 1932).

¹⁶²Cardauns, Goerres-Gesellschaft, p. 22; Germania, August 19, 1882; Braeunlich, op. cit., II, 181; Kissling, Katholikentage, II, 184.

¹⁶³Graf Paul von Hoensbroech, Presse und Ultramontanismus (Berlin: C. A. Schwetke & Sohn, 1905), p. 21.

¹⁶⁴Giuseppe Monti, Internationales Handbuch der katholischen Organisationen (Wien: Verlagsanstalt Herold, 1924); Martin Spahn, Das deutsche Zentrum (Mainz und Muenchen: Kirchheim'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1922), p. 84; Paul Zimmermann, Das Zentrum, Entstehung, Wesen und politische Taetigkeit (Berlin: Buchhandlung der National-liberalen Partei, 1909), pp. 45 f.

only a few months before his death.¹⁶⁵ But that he attached great importance to it can be seen from his tireless efforts in bringing about its establishment, which necessitated long journeys and numerous discussions on his part. This remarkable display of energy of a man in his eightieth year, who knew that his life was rapidly ebbing away, does tribute to his indomitable will.¹⁶⁶ The object of the Volksverein, as reflected by its activities and more particularly by its constitution, for which he was largely responsible, was a fourfold one: (a) to counteract the socialist agitation, (b) to stimulate positive social work among the Catholics, (c) to foster religious unity, and (d) to serve as a bulwark for the Centre in the country at large.¹⁶⁷

The Volksverein is the culmination to a long series of attempts to curb the dangerous spread of socialism, which was considered a long standing menace by the Catholic Church. The materialistic interpretation of history, the emphasis of religion as a tool of the reactionary forces of society, and the doctrine of the class struggle did not harmonize with the principles of the Church. Ever since the days of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels leaders of the Church sought ways and means to check the advance of socialism; to them the problem was a serious one, because the vast majority of Catholics belonged to the poorer classes, who were very susceptible to the socialist propaganda; in the manufacturing regions of the Rhine, where the industrial revolution was making the greatest headway, the Catholics formed the bulk of

¹⁶⁵Der Volksverein, 1891, pp. 9-13.

¹⁶⁶Ibid.

¹⁶⁷For Windthorst's role in the founding of the Volksverein of. Was verdankt der Volksverein Windthorst? (M.-Gladbach: Volksverein Verlag, 1924).

the population.¹⁶⁸ Very early several Catholic leaders realized that it was not merely enough to oppose socialism on religious and theoretical grounds alone, but that the Church itself must help in the solution of pressing social problems; only by engaging in positive social work could the foundations of socialism be undermined.¹⁶⁹ Beginning in the early forties of the nineteenth century, numerous experiments were conducted by Catholic leaders to alleviate the suffering of the working classes. In 1843, Adolph Kolping, a young priest in the industrial city of Elberfeld, who himself had experienced the hardships of the poor, organized a "Journeyman's Association," which soon had chapters in many cities of Germany and Austria.¹⁷⁰ Its primary object was to come to the rescue of the journeymen, with the introduction of machinery, found themselves in a deplorable economic situation. It established chapter-houses, provided for wholesome recreation and entertainment, founded libraries, and in many other ways aided the journeymen; of course, all of its activities were conducted in a religious atmosphere.¹⁷¹ Even more important was the work of Bishop Emanuel v. Ketteler of Mainz, one of the most influential clergymen of the nineteenth century, who used the prestige of his office to champion the cause of the laboring classes; in his sermons and books, which reflected a penetrating mind, he constantly emphasized the need of carrying on social work among the Catholics.¹⁷² His efforts had some tangible results, for during

¹⁶⁸ Otto Mueller, Katholische Arbeitervereine (M.-Gladbach: Verlag der Zentralstelle des Volksvereins, 1904), pp. 88-91.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 90 f.

¹⁷⁰ Staatslexikon, II, 609; Germania, September 10, 1871.

¹⁷¹ Germania, September 10, 1871.

¹⁷² The following are the leading works of Ketteler:

the sixties there was a fruitful experimentation in social activities of all kinds among the Catholics of the Rhine.¹⁷³ A glance into the Christlich-Soziale Blätter of this period will give one an interesting picture of the various organizations that were created for the benefit of the under-privileged workers, whether men, women, or children.¹⁷⁴ This interest in the welfare of the lower classes was not confined to the cities alone, but steps were taken to aid the farmer as well. For example, in 1862 the farmers of Westphalia, who were predominantly Catholic, organized a cooperative enterprise known as Der Westfälische Bauernverein; among other things, it fought certain usurious practices which had endangered the existence of farmers by establishing its own loan bank, from which the individual member might borrow money at low rates of interest.¹⁷⁵ Under the leadership of Baron v. Schorlemer-Alst, this organization had a steady growth; in 1879 it had 16,000 members and a capital of 60,000 marks.¹⁷⁶ So striking was the success of Der Westfälische Bauernverein that other Catholic regions were induced to found

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- a) Die Arbeiterfrage und das Christentum (Mainz, 1890)
 - b) Die Katholiken im Deutschen Reich (Mainz: Entwurf zu einem politischen Programm, 1873)
 - c) Sozial-caritative Fuersorge der Kirche fuer die Arbeiterschaft (Aachen, 1869).
- See also Albert Franz, Der Soziale Katholizismus in Deutschland bis zum Tode Kettlers (M.-Gladbach: Volksvereins-Verlag, 1914), pp. 182-257; Karl Forschner, Wilhelm Emmanuel Freiherr von Ketteler, Bischof von Mainz (Mainz: Verlag von Kirchheim & Co., 1911); Christlich-Soziale Blaetter, XX (1887), 432-34.

¹⁷³Mueller, Katholische Arbeitervereine, pp. 89-91.

¹⁷⁴Christlich-Soziale Blaetter, XX (1887), 432-48; XX (1889), 531-35.

¹⁷⁵Franz, op. cit., pp. 147-81.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 150 ff.

their own organizations.¹⁷⁷ During the Kulturkampf the Catholic social activities were checked, but not entirely. As a rule, the organizations that had been created before 1870 temporarily turned aside from their social work to defend their Church against the onslaught of the state; in most cases, they became strongholds of the Centre party.¹⁷⁸ But hardly had the Kulturkampf subsided, when renewed efforts were made to help the laboring classes.¹⁷⁹ After 1880 this work became more imperative since socialism was growing by leaps and bounds. Two outstanding Catholic leaders now assumed the leadership of the social movement. While the scholarly Franz Hitze, a theological professor of Münster, who during the larger part of the eighties was a member of the Reichstag and Landtag, urged the Centre to take the initiative in social legislation, Franz Brandts of München-Gladbach, a wealthy textile manufacturer, carried the idealistic theories of Ketteler into practice by operating his factory mainly for the benefit of his employees.¹⁸⁰ This benevolent manufacturer not only converted his own plant into a model establishment, but he founded an organization, called Arbeiterwohl, which received the approval of the Katholikentage, for the purpose of bringing Catholic manufacturers and employees together, in order that they might iron out their grievances in a spirit of Christian fellowship.¹⁸¹ Although the growth of this organization was slow, it exerted considerable influence in the Catholic industrial area

¹⁷⁷Kissling, Katholikentage, II, 167; see article "Bauernvereine" in Staatslexikon, I, 614.

¹⁷⁸Kissling, op. cit., II, 163.

¹⁷⁹See footnote No. 177.

¹⁸⁰Kissling, op. cit., II, 156-59; for biography of Franz Brandts cf. Staatslexikon, I, 1030 f.

¹⁸¹Kissling, op. cit., II, 156-59.

of the Rhine.¹⁸²

Windthorst did not take the initiative in any of these social movements. In fact, for a long time he remained aloof from all the interesting experiments made in the Rhine Valley, and and undoubtedly looked with suspicion upon the social theories advocated by such men as Hitze. Largely for tactical reasons, as explained in the previous chapter, he finally supported these social movements, although unquestionably the rapid spread of socialism convinced him that parliamentary legislation must be supplemented by positive social work among the Catholics of the country. In the Katholikentage he began to express his approval of the social organizations which were created from time to time.¹⁸³ In 1885 he urged that all workers' associations should remain in close touch with the Church; he felt that this could be accomplished by placing them under the control of the clergy. "These associations should not be permitted to rule themselves; all of them must come under the spiritual guidance of the clergy, who "in turn must look to their superiors for instructions."¹⁸⁴ He was particularly pleased with the work of Franz Brandts, who was one of his intimate friends.¹⁸⁵ The beneficial practical results which the manufacturers had achieved in coping with the labor problem appealed to him much more than the theoretical expositions of a Ketteler. He praised Arbetierwohl in glowing terms. "Every Catholic employer in Germany should be a member of this organization."¹⁸⁶ In the Katholikentage of 1890, held at

¹⁸²Ibid., II, 157 f.

¹⁸³Ibid., II, 164, 170.

¹⁸⁴Braeunlich, op. cit., I, 117; Kissling,
Katholikentage, II, 161.

¹⁸⁵Staatslexikon, I, 1030 f.

¹⁸⁶Ibid., I, 1031.

Coblenz, he remarked that

it is in München-Gladbach that one has devoted the greatest energy in a very praiseworthy manner to the solution of the social question. Here practical and not merely theoretical results have been achieved. . . . ¹⁸⁷

So impressed was he with Arbeiterwohl that he obtained from it the inspiration for the Volksverein. If it had succeeded in satisfactorily adjusting the relations between employer and employees in München-Gladbach, should not it be possible to extend its scope so as to include the majority of Catholics of Germany? Windthorst felt that its principles should be driven home to every Catholic in the country, no matter to what class or station in life he might belong, if the inroads of socialism were to be definitely checked. With that end in view, he consulted Franz Brandts and Franz Hitze, and outlined to them his plans for a national organization to combat the evils of socialism.¹⁸⁸ The result was the founding of the Volksverein fuer das Katholische Deutschland, for which he wrote the leading provisions of the constitution.¹⁸⁹ The first national appeal of the organization stated that

it favors the encouragement and exemplification of the right principles in the social field; it desires that the employer and the employee should be constantly mindful of their duties in their relations with each other, and that the community interests of both should receive greater recognition.¹⁹⁰

While it is true that Windthorst hoped to curb socialism by means of the Volksverein, he had another motive for founding the organization, namely, to counteract the work of the "Evangelical Federation," which had been founded in 1886 for the

¹⁸⁷Ibid.

¹⁸⁸Was verdankt der Volksverein Windthorst?, p. 5.

¹⁸⁹Ibid.

¹⁹⁰Kissling Katholikentage, II, 223; Braeunlich, op. cit., I, 118 f.

purpose of strengthening the disintegrated Protestantism of Germany, and presenting a more united front against Catholicism.¹⁹¹ That this organization was founded at such a late date, led many Catholics to believe that its primary object was to continue the struggle against the Church, after it had been abandoned as a hopeless undertaking by Bismarck and the state. The strong anti-papal declarations of the federation's leaders confirmed them in their opinion.¹⁹² In the Katholikentage and elsewhere they began to demand the formation of a similar Catholic organization for defensive reasons. They favored the creation of a purely religious organization, which might ward off the real and alleged attacks of the "Evangelical Federation." But Windthorst strenuously opposed the plan, since he feared that it might lead to a fruitless crimination and recrimination between the Catholics and Protestants; a mere scolding back and forth would not help either denomination.¹⁹³ He wished to place the struggle with the Protestants on a higher plane by resorting to more effective indirect methods. By making the Volksverein both an organization for curbing socialism by stimulating positive social work, and simultaneously a medium through which to propagate the Christian social order--by which, of course, he meant the Catholic--he hoped to strengthen the Catholic cause in Germany.¹⁹⁴ He induced the Catholic leaders to accept his plan, which was incorporated in the constitution of the Volksverein.¹⁹⁵

Thus the organization came to serve a twofold purpose,

¹⁹¹Majunke, Ludwig Windthorst, p. 31.

¹⁹²Was verdankt der Volksverein Windthorst?, p. 4.

¹⁹³Ibid.

¹⁹⁴Kissling, Katholikentage, II, 388 f.

¹⁹⁵Ibid., II, 226.

although ostensibly its main function was to prevent socialism from gaining a foothold among the Catholics. Undoubtedly Windthorst was very shrewd in emphasizing the "social" aspect of the Volksverein. By doing so he was able to appeal to large masses of Catholic laborers, who were deeply interested in improving their economic status. Moreover, as Braeunlich points out, merely fighting for the sake of religion, especially after the Kulturkampf had ended, might lead to various inconveniences and unpleasant situations.¹⁹⁶ Finally, by placing the opposition to socialism in the forefront, the organization was certain to arouse some sympathy among the followers of other parties, with the exception of the social democratic party, thereby establishing a community of interest with them.¹⁹⁷

The last statement implies that the Volksverein was also founded for political reasons, which cannot be discerned so readily as the social and religious ones; the Catholic writers omit them entirely by emphasizing the social mission of the organization.¹⁹⁸ But to deny such motives on the part of Windthorst would be to misunderstand his role as a political leader. Not only did he consider socialism as a force that tended to undermine the foundation of the Church, but also as a constant threat to the continued existence of his party. The amazing growth of the Social Democrats in the eighties caused him considerable anxiety. As a Catholic and as the leader of a great party he was not merely eager to keep his fellow Catholics loyal to their Church, but loyal to the Centre as well. To

¹⁹⁶Ibid.; Braeunlich, op. cit., pp. 118-23.

¹⁹⁷Braeunlich, op. cit., pp. 118-23.

¹⁹⁸Kissling, Katholikentage, II, 388 f.; Arthur Boethlingk, Bismarck und das paepstliche Rom (Berlin: Puttkammer & Muehlbrecht, 1911), pp. 439 f.

achieve this end, what would be a more effective method to check this common foe of church and state than by arousing the Catholics to defend the Christian Social order and to engage in positive social work? Just as he had succeeded in uniting the most diverse elements of the Zentrumsfraktion by resorting to the religious appeal, so he hoped to accomplish the same objective among the Catholics of Germany through the medium of a national organization, which was based on the defense of the Christian social order.¹⁹⁹ In other words, the Volksverein would use religion as an instrument for the welfare of the Church and Centre Party.

But one might stop here for a moment to ask: Why did not Windthorst use the Katholikentage for his social purposes, since they, too, paid more attention to the encouragement of positive social work on the part of Catholics? Had he become dissatisfied with them? The fact is that he appreciated their role in fighting socialism; on numerous occasions he pointed with pride at their attempts to find remedies for the grievances of the laboring classes. But he obviously felt that their scope was limited. Great as was their role in the life of German Catholicism, their influence was restricted by the fact that they met only once every year, when they would be attended by some few thousand delegates representing the Catholic organizations of the country. In these circumstances the masses had no opportunity to participate directly in their activities. What Windthorst wanted was a more inclusive organization that would exert a direct influence upon the bulk of the Catholic population, not merely on stated occasions, but throughout the course of the year; to be effective

¹⁹⁹Meerfeld, op. cit., pp. 57 f.

in combating socialism, it must enter the life of every Catholic family of Germany.

The political nature of the Volksverein becomes evident as soon as the statements of its leaders are analyzed. Its first president, Franz Brandts, said that "it should be a support for the Centre in the field of social activities; that's what Windthorst wanted it to be."²⁰⁰ In 1901 Dr. Lieber, who assumed control of the Centre after Windthorst's death, told the delegates of the Katholikentag that

the Volksverein should and will become the organization of organizations; it should be the canopy of Heaven of itself, covering the palaces and huts of all other societies. If you are a member of all Catholic societies, and do not belong to the Volksverein, then you have not fulfilled your duty as a German Catholic.²⁰¹

In the literature published by the Volksverein, consisting of thousands of leaflets and books, the Centre and its leaders, particularly their attitude to social legislation, are constantly praised. Finally, the organization of the society itself makes it admirably suited for political purposes.²⁰² In all parts of Catholic Germany it appointed special key-men, known as Vertrauensmaenner, or "Men of trust," whose function was to gain new members for the organization as well as to familiarize them with its purpose and mission.²⁰³ These Vertrauensmaenner were selected with great care, and received thorough instructions in the aims of the Volksverein before they were permitted to work among the people. Moreover, various bureaus were created for the

²⁰⁰ Braeunlich, op. cit., I, 123.

²⁰¹ Ibid., I, 122.

²⁰² Meerfeld, op. cit., pp. 67 f.

²⁰³ Cf. article "Volksverein" in Staatslexikon, V, 995-98.

workers, the tradesmen, and the farmers. Perhaps most important of all were the educational activities of the Volksverein; by lectures, by pamphlets, and by special courses designed for all classes of people, it effectively disseminated its ideas among the Catholic masses.²⁰⁴ By establishing solidarity among the Catholics and by supporting the candidates of the Centre, it achieved the ends which Windthorst had in mind.

An important object of the Volksverein was to counteract the spirit of particularism among the Catholics of the country. Since the Centre had no national political organization at this time, Windthorst hoped that the Volksverein would serve to weld the innumerable local organizations into a unit.²⁰⁵

From its very inception the Volksverein had a phenomenal growth. Even during the few remaining days of Windthorst's life, when he served it in the capacity of honorary president, it gained thousands of members.²⁰⁶ By the end of 1893 its total membership amounted to 147,545 persons, while in the same period of time it distributed 2,892,000 leaflets, the majority of them dealing with various aspects of the social question.²⁰⁷ By 1902 the membership had grown to 230,000, and by 1914 to 805,000. The official organ of the society, Der Volksverein, enjoyed wide distribution. Its library in München-Gladbach contained 76,000 volumes in 1931.²⁰⁸ The founding of this influential organization was Windthorst's last bequest to the Catholics of Germany.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁴Ibid., v, 996 f.

²⁰⁵Spahn, op. cit., p. 83; Kissling, . . . Katholikentage, II, 389.

²⁰⁶Der Volksverein, 1891, pp. 9-13.

²⁰⁷Ibid., 1894, p. 105.

²⁰⁸Ibid.

²⁰⁹Cardauns, Aus dem Leben eines deutschen Redakteurs, p. 151; Der Volksverein, 1894, p. 113; Huesgen, op. cit., p. 309.

